

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 5

BOSTON GLOBE
9 MAY 1983

A political flip-flop in Iran

STAT

The falling star of the Soviets in Tehran and the rise of moderates

By Ronald Koven
Special to The Globe

PARIS - The banning of Tudeh, the Iranian Communist Party, and the expulsion from Tehran last week of half the Soviet embassy staff appear to be the mirror image of the Iranian student takeover of the US embassy in November 1979.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The hostage-taking at the US embassy was the visible part of a major political move by the left wing of the Islamic revolutionary regime, including Tudeh, to radicalize the revolution. This drove directly to the resignation of the moderate government of Premier Mehdi Bazargan and to the eventual elimination from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's inner circle of such Western-educated figures as the former foreign minister, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, who has since been executed.

The move against the Soviets and their internal allies in Iran follows a strong push by moderates for more conservative economic policies, including denationalization of companies and return of seized property.

Bazargan and his Western-educated technocratic followers have been re-emerging as a political force.

The Soviet military intervention against Afghanistan's Moslem guerrillas - who, like the Iranians to their west, are Farsi-speaking Shiites - provides an opportunity for a rapprochement between the Iranian regime and the United States. Both Tehran and Washington admit to arming the Afghan rebels.

While the Soviet diplomats were leaving Tehran Friday, the weekly rebroadcast of the political sermon that is part of the prayer session at Tehran University was an anti-Soviet diatribe delivered by Mahdavi Kiani, an anti-communist conservative who was Bazargan's interior minister and succeeded him briefly.

Just as Tudeh exploited the US embassy takeover to change the orientation of the regime, the moderates are

using the downfall of the Communist Party to attempt a comeback.

Among those now threatened are Ayatollah Hussein Montazeri, Khomeini's designated spiritual heir, who is seen as a protector of Tudeh.

But the elimination of Tudeh could actually strengthen much of the left wing of the Islamic clergy, which has joined the right in applauding the crackdown because the Communists were political rivals of the leftist mullahs.

The new political lineup will become clear in about 10 days during a congress of the ruling Islamic Republic Party, Western analysts in Tehran say.

The moderates got the ammunition they needed last fall thanks to a major Western intelligence coup, well-placed sources say. A Farsi-speaking Soviet intelligence officer in charge of KGB relations with Tudeh defected from Tehran to Britain. The Boston Globe was the first to report the case.

The defector, Vladimir Kuzichkin, listed merely as a vice consul, provided extensive information on Tudeh's clandestine activities in behalf of Moscow, which allowed the Islamic regime to dismantle the operations. The uncovering of Tudeh arms caches, secret radios transmitting to the Soviet Union and a dummy Iranian trade company that served as a drop for intelligence reports gave the moderates a political opening to undercut Tudeh.

The setback for the Soviets is expected to lead them to redouble their efforts against Iran. Already, under the direction of the recently-named Soviet first vice premier, Haider Aliev - who is also the party boss of Soviet Azerbaijan, which borders on Iran - the Kremlin has been working to undermine Iran's national unity, abandoning its earlier attempts to work in tandem with the Islamic revolution.

The Soviets not only resumed arms aid last year to Iraq, which is locked in a stalemated border war with Iran. Sources say they also sent arms to the Kurdish separatist guerrillas of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by the

Prague-trained Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou.

Aliev is a close ally of Yuri Andropov, the Soviet leader, in the Politburo. Both started their careers in the KGB. Aliev's rise to party leadership in his native Azerbaijan in 1971 foreshadowed Andropov's own jump from the KGB hierarchy to national political leadership. Aliev appointed KGB colleagues to important regional government positions. The son of a mullah, he became responsible for overall policy toward the Moslem countries along the southern Soviet borders - Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The severe setback to Soviet interests in Iran this week could not only affect Aliev's fortunes but Andropov's, too.

One Iranian answer to Soviet moves was the recent start of a radio station beaming Islamic revolutionary propaganda to Iran's fellow Shiite Moslems of Soviet central Asia.

Exiles say their sources in the Iranian armed forces tell them it is hard to believe that the kinds of advanced electronic hardware the Iranian air force has received from abroad to keep its US-built F15 jets flying against Iraq are items that can be purchased in the international arms black market. The implication is that such spare parts could only have been acquired with US government approval.

Just this week, President Ronald Reagan sent Congress a report saying there has been good progress in settling the outstanding disputes between Iran and US companies dating from the hostage crisis.

French officials, whose government is openly helping Iraq with arms to fight Iran, point discreetly to arms sales to Iran by Israel, Italy, West Germany, Switzerland and Britain as Iran's supply of arms from friends and allies of the Soviet Union - Syria, Libya, South Yemen and North Korea - threatens to dry up under pressure from Moscow.

The French say they see their arms sales as part of an emerging division of labor between Paris and Washington